

MISSOURI. Conservationist

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Teamwork

Ever wonder how it all works—so many different conservation organizations and agencies around the state? How do their missions, goals and objectives all work toward a common purpose?

They are feeling the same economic pinch that citizens feel, so how do they all manage? One simple answer: partnership, collaboration and cooperation.

Successes achieved through collaborative partnerships are far greater than individual efforts. In recent months, we have worked with the Missouri Prairie Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, Conservation Federation of Missouri, Ozark Regional Land Trust, Audubon, National Wild Turkey Federation, Quail/Pheasants Forever, The Nature Conservancy, Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service and others. I run the risk of forgetting to include other important partners by listing only those with whom we have most recently worked. However, I list some of them to give you an idea of how widespread the collaboration and cooperation is among conservation agencies and organizations with similar interests. As readers also know, bigger, better conservation achievements result from cooperative work with private landowners and other citizens as well. Allow me to mention a few examples of conservation partners working together.

Missouri Prairie Foundation, The Nature Conservancy and Missouri Department of Conservation work toward educating, restoring and protecting rare prairie grassland communities and the birds, plants and other wildlife that depend on them. We collaborate with these partners to determine the highest priority places to work together, often conserving

larger blocks of prairie grasslands than any one of us could accomplish on our own.



Ducks Unlimited and MDC educate, restore and protect wetland habitats in Missouri, as well as far north on breeding grounds where most of the waterfowl that pass through our state are produced. Amazingly, each of Missouri's dollars is matched by other agencies, organizations and provinces, magnifying our contribution at least five times by the time it is put "on the ground" on the breeding grounds.

Audubon Society of Missouri provides volunteers who work with MDC to track and monitor birds on conservation areas around the state—information used by the public and MDC managers.

The Conservation Federation of Missouri and MDC work toward common conservation goals. Examples of this decades-long partnership include the 2009 Summit on the Future of Missouri Outdoors hosted by CFM, meetings in Washington, D.C., to bring more federal dollars to Missouri for wildlife programs, and efforts that encourage more youth hunts and hunter education, just to name a few.

Chores go faster and seem easier when other family members pitch in. Conservation work is exactly the same, and we are proud to have so many partners in our Conservation family.

DeeCee Darrow, wildlife division chief

OUR MISSION: *To protect and manage the fish, forest and wildlife resources of the state; to serve the public and facilitate their participation in resource management activities; and to provide opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy and learn about fish, forest and wildlife resources.*



Cover: Plains coreopsis by Noppadol Paothong
Left: Blazing star on Stony Point Prairie
Conservation Area by David Stonner

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WHAT IS IT?

I want to thank you
for the “What is it?”
feature [back page]

in the magazine. I’m 69, so I’ve spent a considerable amount of time hunting and fishing in the great state of Missouri. My daughter Angie is quite the accomplished outdoorswoman also. We are neck and neck on identifying the “What is it?” photos. Thank you so much for giving us the opportunity to interact through our magazine.

Kenny Lumb, Centralia

ROARING RIVER

My family and I have been coming to Roaring

River for the last 13 years. It was great to learn a little bit of history on Roaring River [March; *Hatchery Centennial*].

I can say that my family and I have never enjoyed a park like this one in ALL of our years of camping and fishing. I think that your article on Roaring River just about sums up our feelings on this place! We took our kids to Disney World one year instead of coming to Roaring River and we asked them how they liked it. Both of our boys, now 14 and 8, said “That was great Mom and Dad, but we would of much rather gone fishing at Roaring River!”

We have made many memories at this fabulous place and will make more this year when we visit. Thanks again for sharing with everyone what we already know—that there is no place like Roaring River!

Denise Hart, via Internet

I was construction supervisor for the operations division of MDC and spent several days at Roaring River on projects. I enjoyed the article in the March issue [*Hatchery Centennial*]. I’ve been retired for 12 years and would like to visit the park this year and see all the upgrades. Keep this kind of article coming.

Jess E. Stephens, Salem

The March issue was in my opinion one of the best in recent times. I’ve had the privilege of reading the *Conservationist* since February 1969, and this last issue was simply outstanding. The photographs and the verbiage surpassed any in recent times... could be that I’m a trout enthusiast and a little biased. Stonner’s trout fishing pictorial essay of the North Fork of the White River [*Gone Fishing*], photographed near the Falls, captured the essence of wild trout fishing in one of the Midwest’s finest trout streams. Dave Ulrich’s essay on turkey hunting [*Gainful Gobbling*] again kept me interested from start to finish. Stonner’s photographs set it off nicely.

Spencer E. Turner, Columbia

50 YEARS OF MO. TURKEY

The article in the April issue about the first turkey hunting season in Missouri [Page 22] was of great interest to our family. The picture of the hunter on Page 26 is of my father-in-law, Roy Sallee, who lived near Long Run at that time. He loved the outdoors and the joys of hunting and fishing. He was a fishing guide on Bull Shoals Lake. Roy passed away in the spring of 1975 but his memory is still with us in the fields, forest and lakes.

Robert Wilson, Independence

CORRECTION

In the April “Ask the Ombudsman” column, the answer to “Which shotgun gauges are legal for use in turkey hunting?” should have read: “The Missouri *Wildlife Code* restricts the gauge of shotgun for any hunting to not larger than 10 gauge. There are no further restrictions for turkey hunting, so even .410 caliber shotguns are allowed.”



Reader Photo

STEALTH CAPTURE

Kevin Ferguson captured this image of a conopid fly at Shaw Nature Reserve in Gray Summit. “I had been trying my hand at macro photography when I came across this strange fly with what appeared to be an eye on a stalk in the middle of it’s head,” says Ferguson. MDC Natural History Biologist Mike Arduser says the “eye stalk” is really an antenna. “These flies, sometimes called thick-headed flies, are a relatively small but interesting group in Missouri,” says Arduser. “The females intercept bees and wasps in flight and lay an egg on them, in very specific places—kind of like the stealth fighters of the fly world. Their larvae are internal parasites of the bees and wasps, an unusual mode of life, even for a fly.”



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Testing Finds No CWD in Missouri's Wild Deer

Tests on free-ranging deer collected in Linn, Macon and Chariton counties in March showed no cases of chronic wasting disease (CWD).

CWD is a fatal neurological disease that can be transmitted among deer, elk and moose. There is no evidence that CWD can infect people or spread from deer to domestic livestock, such as sheep or cattle. CWD has been found in 17 states including Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

Missouri joined the list after the Missouri Department of Agriculture reported the state's first and only known case of CWD in late February. It came from a captive whitetail buck at a private hunting ranch in Linn County. The MDA handles CWD testing in captive deer in Missouri. The MDA then tested an additional 50 captive deer from the

ranch. Results showed no additional cases of CWD.

In response to the initial case, the Conservation Department collected tissue samples from 153 free-ranging deer within a five-mile radius of the private hunting ranch for CWD testing. Also included were 72 samples collected from hunter-harvested deer taken from Linn and surrounding counties during the 2009–2010 deer seasons. Test results for all samples came back with the result "CWD Not Detected."

As part of its ongoing, statewide CWD monitoring program, the Conservation Department plans to test tissue samples from hunter-harvested deer taken in the northern half of the state during the fall deer seasons this year. It also will test tissue samples from more deer in the area where the initial CWD case was discovered.

With the help of hunters and landowners, the Conservation Department has tested more than 24,000 free-ranging deer from all parts of the state for CWD since 2002. Results from all those tests were negative. This long-term testing has been part of Missouri's ongoing monitoring for CWD through a special task force established in 2002. The task force includes experts from the Conservation Department, the MDA, the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Archery Program Has a Big Impact

More than 600 youths gathered in Linn on Feb. 13 for the 2010 Missouri National Archery in the Schools Program (MoNASP) state tournament. That is more than double the number who took part in last year's inaugural tournament. In 2008 there were 8,000 Missouri students participating in MoNASP classes. By the end of 2009, that figure had ballooned to more than 16,000. MoNASP Coordinator Kevin Lohraff attributes the program's rapid growth to archery's "wow factor."

Parents and teachers tell Lohraff the program changes lives. They describe "wow" moments, as youngsters they know develop new energy and focus and experience a kind of awakening.

Other "wow" moments occur when shooters arrive at the state tournament at Linn State Technical College.

"It's pretty impressive to see 70 kids at a time on the shooting line—quiet, determined and absolutely focused," says Lohraff. "You could probably hear a pin drop if it weren't for the dull roar of 70 arrows thumping into targets."

The habits of concentration and discipline developed in MoNASP translate into better grades and improved performance in other activities.



Teachers and school administrators report that students' behavior improves when they know their reward will be shooting archery.

Help is available for starting local archery programs. Find out how by contacting Lohraff at Kevin.Lohraff@mdc.mo.gov or calling 573-751-4115, ext. 3294.

"Put a bow in a kid's hands and help them shoot," says Lohraff. "You might see a little light go on and you might see a kid change before your eyes. You might just say, 'Wow.'"

Turkey Season Aids State Economy

Looking for a bright spot in Missouri's economic picture? Look outdoors. The spring turkey season pumps tens of millions of dollars into the state economy, just as it does every year.

Last year, Missourians spent more than \$1.5 million on spring turkey hunting permits. Out-of-state hunters shelled out nearly \$1.4 million for Missouri spring turkey hunting permits. The fall season added another \$235,447 to 2009 turkey permit sales. The economic impact of

turkey hunting, both spring and fall, goes far beyond permit sales, however. Turkey hunters spend more than \$125 million each year on travel, food, lodging and hunting equipment, including everything from shotguns and ammunition to turkey calls and camouflage clothing.

In all, the economic impact of this spending is more than \$248 million annually and supports more than 2,300 jobs.

(continued on Page 6)



ASK THE OMBUDSMAN

Q: I found a very odd-looking thing growing in my lawn. It was a hollow, pinkish-orange tube about 6 inches tall and had brown, slimy material at the tip. Can you identify it?

A: What you have is the reproductive part of a type of fungus called a stinkhorn. There are several species, but the one commonly reported from Missouri is the elegant stinkhorn. Although related to mushrooms, puffballs and shelf fungi, stinkhorns look different enough from those groups that people often don't recognize them as a type of fungus. The greenish-brown slime at the tip contains the spores by which the fungus reproduces. A foul-smelling odor attracts flies that eat the spores and pick up the slime on their legs, helping to spread the spores to new areas. A stinkhorn will usually deteriorate in a few days and may not reappear again in the same spot.

Q: I have noticed our squirrels licking the calcium that is deposited around the edge of our bird bath by evaporation of the water. Are they lacking in minerals? Would it be beneficial to put out a mineral block for them?

A: Squirrels are known to lick mineral deposits. It is similar behavior to that of deer and other animals that use natural salt licks and man-made salt or mineral blocks. Squirrels seen on paved roads in the winter or spring are sometimes licking the salt that was put there as ice-melt.

I don't think there is any need to supply your squirrels with extra minerals. Their normal diet should keep them healthy. As do many of us, they probably eat more salt than they need when it is easily available.



Stinkhorn fungus

Ombudsman Tim Smith will respond to your questions, suggestions or complaints concerning Department of Conservation programs. Write him at PO Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180, call him at 573-522-4115, ext. 3848, or e-mail him at Ombudsman@mdc.mo.gov.

Economic estimates using information from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service show that turkey hunting expenditures generate nearly \$5 million in state sales taxes and another \$2 million in state income tax revenues annually. These contributions to the Missouri economy are especially welcome when state revenues lag and force cuts to important services.

Conservation of the wild turkey has made Missouri one of the nation's top turkey hunting destinations. This enriches both the lives of those who hunt and the Missouri economy.

If you are interested in wild turkeys in Missouri, visit our turkey pages at www.MissouriConservation.org/7498.

The figures on hunter expenditures are based on information from the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, which has been conducted about every five years since 1955. More information about the survey is available at www.fws.gov and additional economic analyses are available at www.southwickassociates.com.

Fair Weather Boosts Spring Turkey Harvest

Young hunters checked 3,945 turkeys during Missouri's youth turkey season April 10 and 11, thanks in large part to ideal hunting conditions.

Top counties for the youth season were Franklin with 133 turkeys checked, Osage with 101 and Ste. Genevieve with 77.

Male turkeys gobble most actively on warm, sunny days with moderate wind. Weather during this year's youth hunt closely matched this description, paving the way for an excellent hunt.

This year's youth harvest represents a 37-percent increase from last year, when cold, windy weather hampered young hunters. Previous harvests have ranged from a low of 2,530 in 2001, the first year of the youth hunt, to a high of 3,894 in 2005.

Mature gobblers made up 70.6 percent of this year's youth harvest, compared to 69.6 percent last year and 70.2 percent in 2005.

Missouri's two-day youth season is open to hunters age 6 through 15. It provides an opportunity for adults to focus on mentorship. The impact on the state's wild turkey flock is minimal, since the youth harvest usually accounts for approximately 5 percent of the annual harvest.



Hunters age 6 through 15 checked 3,945 turkeys during Missouri's two-day youth turkey season.

Staying Safe With Black Bears

May is a lean month for Missouri's black bears. Most berries and other soft fruits still are weeks from ripening, and bears' staple foods—nuts and acorns—won't be available until fall. Consequently, bears must range widely to meet their nutritional needs. That means people must take care not to accidentally attract hungry bears with pet and livestock food, garbage or camp supplies. Even birdseed and hummingbird feeders can prove too tempting for bears to resist, in spite of their natural inclination to shy away from human habitations. To avoid trouble—for you and bears—keep edible items locked safely inside when not in use. Remove them entirely at the first sign of bear activity, and call the nearest Conservation Department office (see list on Page 3) to report bear sightings. For more information about avoiding bear problems, visit www.MissouriConservation.org/7835. To find out what to do if you encounter a bear, visit www.MissouriConservation.org/8914.

Permit Sales Up in 2009

Was 2009 a good year to hunt and fish? Did jobless outdoors-people take advantage of their imposed leisure by filling freezers with fish and game? Or did the economic downturn that began in 2008 simply remind people what amazing recreational bargains hunting and fishing are? Whatever the explanation, fishing and hunting permit sales increased last year, bucking a long-term national trend.

The Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation reported a 4.7-percent increase in the number of fishing permits sold nationwide from 2008 to 2009. Show-Me State fishing permit sales increased 7.4 percent during the same period. Increased fishing permit sales resulted partly from below-average sales in 2008, the wettest year in Missouri history.

The number of hunting permits of all kinds sold in Missouri increased 2.5 percent from 2008 to 2009. That is less than the 3.5-percent increase documented in a 12-state survey commissioned by the National Shooting Sports Foundation. However, Missouri's hunting-permit sales have not lagged as much as most other states in recent years.

“I AM CONSERVATION”



DYLAN LEHRBAUM

Missouri River Relief is working to clean up a stretch of the Osage River. The focus has been a string of illegal dumps, including a massive 100-year-old dump spilling down a bluff into the river. Since 2008, 400 volunteers have removed 44 tons of trash from the area by hand, including 580 tires.

Stream Team 1875, Missouri River Relief *by Jim Low*



Becoming a standout among Missouri's 4,000 hard-working Stream Teams is no small feat. By any objective measure, however, Missouri River Relief is an outstanding example of citizen activism.

Since its formation in 2001, MRR has organized 55 river cleanups that have removed 537 tons of trash, ranging from beer cans to classic cars, from the Missouri River and its flood plain. This Columbia-based group is not content to remove trash from Missouri's stretch of

its namesake river. Last summer, MRR marshaled 2,000 volunteers who removed 57 tons of trash from Yankton, S.D., to the Mississippi River confluence.

MRR also has dozens of water-quality monitoring trips, hundreds of workshops, public meetings and programs and hundreds of trees planted to its credit. But the group's greatest achievement is getting more than 12,000 volunteers into direct contact with the Big Muddy. The experience radically transforms participants' attitudes toward the river. Mistaken notions of a dangerous, ugly ditch dissolve in the face of a majestic river that is rich in fish, wildlife and recreational potential.

Ten years ago, the Missouri River was one of the loneliest outdoor venues in Missouri. On a trip down the river today, you meet campers, kayakers, birdwatchers, anglers, hunters, pleasure boaters and recreationists of every stripe, whose first exposure to the river came during MRR-sponsored river cleanups. A river that once had almost no friends now has a growing host of passionate promoters, thanks to Missouri River Relief. For more information, visit www.riverrelief.org, or write to Missouri River Relief, PO Box 463, Columbia, MO 65205. ▲

Birth *and* Rebirth *at* Caney Mountain

Turkey restoration is more than just a conservation success story for Bernice Morrison, it's personal.

by FRANCIS SKALICKY

Bernice Morrison on Caney Mountain Conservation Area in front of the log cabin where he was born and on the area where he helped restore Missouri's wild turkey population.





Bernice Morrison and Caney Mountain Conservation Area are joined at the heart.

"I have a lot of memories of this area," the 92-year-old Gainesville resident says as his eyes roam off into the surrounding hills and hollows that give this Missouri Department of Conservation wildlife refuge in Ozark County its natural beauty. Many of those memories involve the work Morrison did—first as a concerned citizen and later as a Department of Conservation employee—to

help bring back the wild turkey in Missouri.

Today, with a healthy population and a spring hunting season that pumps millions of dollars into Missouri's economy, it's hard to believe Missouri's turkeys ever needed help. However, there was a time when wild turkeys were on the verge of disappearing from the state. Many of the reasons they didn't are rooted in a Conservation Department restoration program that started more than a half-century ago at the Caney Mountain area.

Morrison's connection with this 7,899-acre swatch of Ozark splendor goes beyond turkey trapping and gobbling surveys. Years before Caney Mountain became the alpha site of the turkey's comeback in Missouri, it was the birthplace of Morrison. Reminders of that event are still visible in the form of a rock chimney that stands vigil over a small enclosure of collapsed log walls alongside Caney's North Hiking Trail. It's all that remains of the cabin Morrison's father, W.J. "Joe" Morrison, built for his family in the closing years of the 19th century.

"I was born there on Christmas Day, 1917," Morrison proudly recalls. Hard times forced the family to leave that site when Bernice, the youngest of 10 children, was still an infant, but the Morrisons remained in the area. The family honed their affections for the Caney Mountain area by hunting the rugged terrain often. One quarry that was showing up with alarmingly less frequency for the Morrisons and other hunters around the state was the wild turkey.

"They were being poached out," Morrison recalled. Poorly regulated hunting, coupled with habitat destruction caused by overgrazing, over-burning and a number of other human-related alterations to the landscape, had dropped Missouri's turkey numbers to just slightly more than 2,000 by the mid-1930s. In 1938, the Department of Conservation closed turkey hunting throughout the state.

Attempts at reviving the state's turkey population were already well underway—and failing miserably. Beginning in the 1920s, state biologists began to release farm-raised birds into the wild in an effort to reverse the declining turkey numbers. This did nothing but make a bad situation worse. The pen-raised birds had trouble surviving, and those that lived long enough to



"As the population grew and we relocated birds to other parts of the state, it was the start of something that was to rewrite conservation history in Missouri," says Conservation Department Wildlife Division Chief DeeCee Darrow.

propagate produced poults that, due to their partially domestic heritage, weren't as hearty or as wily as their wild brethren.

By the time the Missouri Department of Conservation came into existence in 1937, wildlife experts of the newly formed agency knew the only way to save the state's turkey population was to find an area where wild birds still roamed. These birds, if they still existed, would have to be isolated from human disturbance and then, if propagation was successful, they could be used as seed stock to repopulate the state. Starker Leopold, son of famed conservationist Aldo Leopold and project leader of the state's turkey restoration effort, had been tasked with finding such a location. When he saw the wooded hills of the Caney Mountain Area, he knew his search was ended.

"Starker Leopold came down here and fell in love with this area," Morrison recalled. "He just thought it was a wonderful place." In a 1941 report, Leopold described why Caney Mountain was a perfect spot to begin the wild turkey's comeback in Missouri.

"Historical accounts indicate that native wild turkeys maintained their numbers in the Caney Mountain neighborhood for a longer period than in most other sections of the Ozarks," he wrote. "This was undoubtedly due to the later period of settlement, as well as the roughness, size and isolation of this range of hills."

In 1940, the state purchased a 5,530-acre area in Ozark County, named it the Caney Mountain Wildlife Refuge, declared it off-limits to hunting and designated the site for wild turkey management. Leopold was to be the lead biologist and W.J. Morrison, Bernice's father, was appointed as Caney Mountain's refuge patrolman. To fulfill his job, the state supplied Morrison with a pickup truck, fire-fighting equipment, farm implements, tools and a horse. The elder Morrison was assisted in his duties by his son, Bernice. Their duties also included planting and caring for wildlife food patches, patrolling the refuge's boundaries, maintaining ponds and springs on the area, fostering relationships with adjacent landowners and, of course, keeping accurate records of turkey numbers and turkey activity on the area.

At the project's beginning, there wasn't much to keep track of.



NOPPADOL PAOTHONG

The trapping and relocation of wild turkeys from Caney Mountain CA helped aid the restoration of Missouri's wild turkey population.



**Caney Mountain
CA is located in
Ozark County.**

“They were down to about 10 or 12 turkeys for the whole refuge,” Morrison says. Though this number seems too small to be believable, Leopold’s 1941 report backs up Morrison’s memory. In a survey done in the spring of 1940, Leopold counted 10 turkeys on the 5,530-acre Caney Mountain area. In a broader survey that encompassed 76,800 acres, Leopold recorded a paltry sum of 35 turkeys.

When W.J. Morrison died in 1942, Bernice

took on his father’s job as refuge patrolman at Caney Mountain and continued to work closely with Leopold. Just as important as the turkey numbers they saw steadily increasing were the management strategies they were documenting. Caney Mountain was a test site that would either be the first step of a turkey restoration project that could be replicated in other parts of the state, and perhaps the country, or the final chapter of a failing wildlife management effort.




JIM RATHERT

“Some practices being applied in this area may be applicable to other turkey refuges in Missouri,” Leopold wrote in his 1941 report. “Others need testing. Still others may never find general application. But from this project may eventually come some fairly definite knowledge of how to manage wild turkeys on an Ozark refuge.” Fortunately for today’s hunters, those experimental strategies produced results, first at the Caney Mountain area and

later at the Peck Ranch Conservation Area in Carter and Shannon counties, which was purchased in 1945.

“With the wild turkey refuge at Caney Mountain and the later purchase of thousands of acres at the Peck Ranch Conservation Area, there was finally enough land to protect and manage whole-heartedly for turkeys,” says Conservation Department Wildlife Division Chief DeeCee Darrow. “As the population grew and we relocated birds to other parts of the state, it was the start of something that was to rewrite conservation history in Missouri.”

Morrison moved to Kansas in 1943, but he returned to Missouri in 1956 and got a job with the Conservation Department. Turkey hunting



“Starker Leopold came down here and fell in love with this area. He just thought it was a wonderful place.

was still closed throughout the state but, by this time, Missouri’s wild turkey numbers were well on the road to recovery. Morrison had several wildlife-related duties and one of his main jobs was trapping turkeys and transporting them around the state.

“You had to wait until the turkeys were on the bait and their heads were down, then you fired the nets. And you talk about a job ... getting those turkeys out of the net—now that was work,” Morrison recalled with a chuckle. It was work that bore its first real fruit in 1960 when Missouri held its first turkey season since the late 1930s.

In addition to trapping turkeys, Morrison has also harvested his fair share of turkeys over the years. Despite the wear and tear that 92 years of life is beginning to impose on Morrison’s frame, he still considers himself a turkey hunter.

“I don’t know whether I’ve stopped (turkey hunting) or not,” he says, and laughed, noting that he hunted last spring. “It’s still pretty exciting to hear that old gobbler in the spring.” Thanks to the efforts of people like Morrison more than a half-century ago, that’s a sound that can be enjoyed by many Missourians today.

“I like to think that I had a small part in bringing the turkeys back,” he says. ▲

Blooming Talent

Flowers are a popular and dramatic photo pursuit.

by NOPPADOL PAOTHONG and DAVID STONNER

GRAY-HEADED CONEFLOWERS *Noppadol Paothong*

I found these gray-headed coneflowers in a small neighborhood in Jefferson City in June 2006. You can find coneflowers in prairies in late June.

📷 17–40mm f/4 lens • f/11 • 1/160 sec • ISO 400







April showers bring May flowers, and May flowers bring photographers out by the score. Few things rival flowers (save, perhaps, babies and pets) for the title of most common photo subject. The reason for this is simple: Flowers are beautiful, accessible and can be found everywhere.

Missouri has more than 2,000 native flowering plants. Of these, as many as 1,500 different species would be recognized as a flower by the layman. These flowers range in color from red to blue, white to purple and many colors in between. They range in size from less than an inch, to several feet tall. Some of these flowers can be found throughout the state, while others have specialized habitat needs and only appear in isolated locations. So, if you want to

see a specific flower, you might need to travel to a specific place, but if you are not picky about your species, you can find wildflowers almost anywhere.

Where to look

One common place to see wildflowers is along our roadsides, where plenty of sun allows for good growth of sun-loving species. Another good place to see wildflowers is on a nature trail. There are countless trails at conservation areas, national forests, state and local parks and other natural areas throughout the state. In forested areas, the best wildflower viewing is in early spring before the trees leaf out and shade the forest floor.

Opportunities to see and photograph wildflowers abound; all you have to do is hop in your car, put on



◀ **WILD BERGAMOT** *Noppadol Paothong*

In July 2006 I photographed this wild bergamot in a small neighborhood prairie near Jefferson City. You can find bergamots on prairies and rocky, open ground starting in mid-late June.

📷 180mm f/3.5 lens • f/8 • 1/40 sec • ISO 200



◀ **PURPLE POPPY MALLOW**

David Stonner

This photo was taken at the Conservation Discovery Center in Kansas City on an early June morning with lots of dew. Backlighting the subject by placing the sun behind the flower highlighted the hairs on the stem and made the color of the bloom glow.

📷 100mm f/2.8 lens • f/5.6
1/400 sec • ISO 200

your hiking boots or simply stroll out into your backyard. Even a lawn weed, like dandelion, can be a great subject for photography.

Equipment needs

Specialized equipment is not necessary to take rewarding photos of flowers. A decent point and shoot camera can get the job done, or if you want to take it a bit further, a basic SLR camera with a normal to medium-telephoto lens and a tripod are all you need to take good wildflower photos.

The more advanced photographer may want to add a good macro lens for close-up photos of individual blooms or petals, and some reflectors or strobes to better manage lighting conditions. The best lighting control, however,

is an overcast day. By minimizing harsh shadows and highlights, cloud cover creates a soft, pleasing light that saturates colors.

The key is that flowers can be found everywhere, their beauty is universally admired and they won't run away. So they make the perfect photo subject for amateur and professional alike. Perhaps the photos in this article will inspire you to venture out and create some of your own stunning images. Or, at least, to venture out and enjoy the visual spectacle of the flowers that surround us. Brochures and guidebooks on MDC hiking trails and wildflowers, such as *Missouri Wildflowers* by Edgar Denison, are available at nature centers and MDC offices throughout the state, and online at www.mdcNatureShop.com. ▲





▼ INDIAN PAINTBRUSH *David Stonner*

Last May at MDC's Northeast Regional Office in Kirksville, I found this bundle of Indian paintbrush.

📷 100–400mm f/4.5-5.6 lens • f/5.6 • 1/500 sec • ISO 400



▲ ASHY SUNFLOWER

Noppadol Paothong

In July 2007 at Diamond Grove Prairie Natural Area in Diamond, I found this field of ashy sunflowers.

📷 17–40mm f/4 lens • f/16

0.5 sec • ISO 200

▼ **BLUEBELLS** *Noppadol Paothong*

Bluebells can bloom anytime from March through June in Missouri. I photographed this flower in March 2007 at Blue Spring Natural Area near Eminence.

📷 100mm f/2.8 lens • f/8 • 1/25 sec • ISO 200





◀ CONEFLOWER *David Stonner*

This young coneflower was just beginning to bloom in May at Burr Oak Woods Conservation Nature Center in Blue Springs. I was drawn to the rich color and contrast while looking down on the flower.

📷 100mm f/2.8 macro lens • f/3.2 • 1/250 sec • ISO 500

▼ BLACK-EYED SUSANS *Noppadol Paothong*

These black-eyed susans were photographed in June 2006 in a small neighborhood prairie near Jefferson City. You can find more black-eyed susans on rocky prairies, open woods and rocky roadsides in June and July.

📷 17-40mm f/4 lens • f/11 • 1/60 sec • ISO 800







May is the Month for Bluegill

Now is the time
to catch this perfect panfish.

by MARK GOODWIN, *photos by* DAVID STONNER

MISSOURI OFFERS A WIDE VARIETY of outdoor activities. Some are challenging and regularly serve up humble pie. Dove hunting, for example, often leaves skilled wingshooters shaking their heads. Wild turkeys, their brains no bigger than walnuts, routinely foil the best efforts of veteran hunters. Muskies, even in a lake that has good numbers of them, can seem as rare as dinosaurs.

Outdoor challenges are great, but a steady diet of them can wear you out. Now and again, it's quite a relief to enjoy an outdoor activity that's easy and in which success is almost guaranteed. This month, you can find easy outdoor fun at most farm ponds and other impound-



ments across the state. That's because the bluegill spawn is on, offering some of the finest fishing action of the year.

Bluegill Basics

If you live in Missouri, you are probably familiar with bluegill. These native fish are usually the most abundant panfish in small impoundments throughout our state. They're not only prolific, but they have the same habitat requirements (warm, clear water where aquatic plants and other cover is present) as largemouth bass. That's why bluegill are often stocked as forage for largemouth bass.

The bluegill is a member of the sunfish family, a strictly North American family of 30 species that also includes black bass and crappie. A casual observer might mistake bluegill for other panfish, such as green sunfish or hybrid sunfish. But the small mouth and brassy color of bluegill easily distinguish them.

Bluegill often top out at a length of 9.5 inches and a weight of 12 ounces, but when hooked, bluegill prove tenacious fighters. An 8-inch bluegill will put a serious bend in any light-action rod, and bluegill can get bigger. The state record bluegill weighed 3 pounds.

Working the Spawn

Bluegill bite any time of the year, but in May, during the spring spawn, bluegill fishing is at

BLUEGILL MANAGEMENT

Managing bluegill in impoundments can be tricky. In natural waters, such as streams and rivers, many fish species consume bluegill, which helps stabilize their numbers.

Impoundments usually have fewer predators. Farm ponds commonly hold only bluegill, largemouth bass and channel catfish. The largemouth bass, particularly if overharvested, don't consume enough bluegill to prevent overpopulation. Competition among bluegill for food becomes high, and overall bluegill growth becomes stunted.

Prevent this problem by harvesting more bluegill. Take out four to five bluegill for every bass taken—up to 100 bluegill per acre per year. If you want more big bluegill, harvest fewer bass. If you want big bass, take more bass from the impoundment. You either manage for larger bass or larger bluegill. It's difficult to have both in one pond.



its best. Action is fast, and you're more likely to catch large, mature bluegill at this time. Immature bluegill—the little bait stealers that plague bluegill anglers at other times—are typically not part of the action in May.

When water temperatures reach into the 70s, male bluegills move to the shallows and fan out and guard nests, which appear as circular depressions, 15 to 20 inches wide. If water is murky, nests may be in water no deeper than 12 inches. In clearer water, nests may be as deep as 6 feet.

Males construct nests in clusters, forming beds that may consist of a few nests to a hundred or more. In clear ponds, finding the beds is easy. You can spot them as you walk the bank or boat around the pond edge. In muddy ponds, you must fish until you find them. Once you find a large bedding area, if the habitat doesn't change, bluegill will use it year after year.

Techniques for catching spawning bluegill are simple. In clear water, whether fishing from

the bank or a boat, it pays to keep a distance from the beds to prevent spooking the fish. Use light to medium tackle with 4- or 6-pound test line for casting light lures or bait.

Bluegill have small mouths, so keep whatever you throw small. 1/32-ounce leadhead jigs, either cast and retrieved, or suspended under a bobber, prove effective. Live bait is often most productive. Worms, grasshoppers and crickets all work well. Use small hooks—sizes 6 or 8. Hooks with long shanks are easier to remove from a bluegill's mouth. A pair of needle-nosed pliers will help you extract hooks.

Use a small bobber and small split shot to suspend your bait just off the bottom. When using live bait over an active bluegill bed, the bobber often ducks under the water before it has time to settle. Conditions typically make no difference during the spawn. The bluegills bite morning, midday or evening, whether it's cloudy, sunny or raining. Females that congregate at the edge of the beds bite readily, too.

May provides some of the best bluegill fishing of the year. Bluegill bite morning, midday or evening, whether it's cloudy, sunny or raining.

In the Kitchen

Bluegill meat has great flavor and is firm and flaky. It is well suited for most fish recipes. To get the best flavor out of your bluegill, place them on ice or keep them alive until just before cleaning.

Once you've filleted your catch, rinse them immediately and completely. This step is crucial. Fish mucus, blood and scales adhere to fillets during the cleaning process. If not removed, these will give the meat a fishy taste.

The following three recipes are favorites at our household.



BLUEGILL CHOWDER

6 bacon strips, cut into 1-inch pieces
¾ cup chopped onion
½ cup chopped celery
3 medium potatoes,
peeled and cubed
2 cups water
½ cup chopped carrots
2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley
1 tablespoon lemon juice
½ teaspoon dill weed
¼ teaspoon garlic salt
⅛ teaspoon pepper
1 pound bluegill fillets,
cut into 1-inch chunks
1 cup half-and-half cream

In a 3-quart saucepan, cook the bacon until crisp. Remove bacon and set aside, discarding all but 2 tablespoons of drippings. Sauté onion and celery in drippings until tender. Add the next eight ingredients. Simmer until vegetables are tender, about 30 minutes. Add fish and bacon and simmer for 5 minutes. Add cream and heat through.

Yield: 4–6 servings.

FRIED BLUEGILL

¾ cup corn meal
¼ cup all-purpose white flour
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
¼ teaspoon black pepper
1 egg
1 pound bluegill fillets

In a large ziplock bag, thoroughly mix all the dry ingredients. Crack the egg over the fillets and mix thoroughly. The egg helps the breading bind to the fillets. Heat oil to 350 degrees. Put batches of six or seven fillets in the ziplock bag and shake well to coat.

Place fillets in hot oil. If you are deep frying, the fillets float when they are done. If you are pan frying, three or four minutes a side is about right. Avoid overcooking. Bluegill fillets are small pieces of meat. Overcooking toughens them.

When fish are done, remove them from the oil and let them drip. Place the fillets in a single layer on a doubled sheet of absorbent paper toweling. Don't put one piece of fish on top of another. The oil from the top fish will soak into the fish on the bottom, making greasy fish.

Flip the fillets on the paper toweling and let that side drain. Before serving, place the fillets on a fresh layer of paper toweling. This treatment leaves the batter crispy and practically oil free.

Yield: 4 servings.

BLUEGILL CREOLE

¼ cup each chopped onion,
celery and green pepper
2 garlic cloves, minced
2 teaspoons olive oil
¾ cup chicken broth
1 tablespoon tomato paste
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon each dried basil,
oregano and thyme
⅛ teaspoon each white,
black and cayenne pepper
Dash paprika
½ cup diced Italian tomatoes,
drained
1 pound bluegill fillets
Hot cooked rice
Minced fresh parsley

In a small skillet, sauté the onion, celery, green pepper and garlic in oil until tender. Add the broth, tomato paste and seasonings and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, for 5 minutes. Stir in Italian tomatoes.

Arrange the fillets in a greased 13-inch x 9-inch x 2-inch baking dish; top with vegetable mixture. Bake uncovered at 375 degrees for 20 minutes. Serve over rice and sprinkle with parsley.

Yield: 4 servings.

Take a Kid

Fishing usually requires patience—which many kids lack. Fishing for spawning bluegill, however, often produces brisk action. As soon as you rebait and cast, you're into another fish.

HYBRID SUNFISH

Many fish hatcheries cross green sunfish with bluegill to produce hybrid sunfish. These hybrids grow quickly and bite aggressively, which makes them popular with anglers.

Hybrid sunfish also reproduce at a slower rate than bluegill, so they are less likely to overpopulate. Because of their reduced reproduction, hybrids will not support a bass population. If you stock hybrid sunfish, you also must stock bluegill as a food source for your bass.

What with great fishing and beautiful May weather, there's no better time to turn youngsters on to fishing.

To make the most of the opportunity, help your youngster at every turn. Rebait and cast for them until they learn how to do those things themselves. It's okay to let them set the hook when the bobber dips under. Spawning bluegill often won't let go, so timing isn't critical. Congratulate and praise them for every fish they reel in, and then help them unhook their catch.

Make the experience a party. Bring snacks and cool drinks and take photos of the kids with their best fish. At home let them watch or help as you clean the fish. Let them help with cooking, too. You're taking advantage of a unique opportunity to connect them with nature, creating lasting memories, and introducing them to a pastime they can enjoy for life. ▲

Fishing for bluegill is a great way to turn kids on to fishing because it produces brisk action. As soon as you rebait and cast, you're into another fish.



Wild Geranium

Bees, butterflies and you will enjoy this hardy native Missouri wildflower either in the wild or in your yard.

APRIL SHOWERS, DO indeed, bring May flowers to Missouri's woodlands, so this month is a great time for a hike along a woodland trail. Wild sweet William, Jacob's ladder and wild pink are a few of the many native plants showing their colors. Keep a sharp eye out for the delicate looking, but ever-so-hardy, wild geranium (*Geranium maculatum*). Its blossoms range in shade from soft pink to lavender and give the plant a fresh, even fragile, look. These flowers, however, are made for working. If you take a close look at them, you'll see a series of fine lines that lead to the center of the blossom. These are nectar guides that direct pollinators to the plant's nectar and pollen. The directions work well for a host of pollinators that visit wild geraniums each spring—they include bumblebees, Mason bees, Miner bees and small butterflies and skippers.

As the season progresses, the plant continues to serve the insect community as a larval host for several moth species. It also provides food for mammals and birds: Deer sometimes dine on the foliage and chipmunks feed on ripened seeds.

Birds, too, are fond of the seeds, which have an interesting and entertaining dispersal system. The seed capsule consists of five cells, each containing one seed. They are joined together into a long, beak-like column that resembles a crane's bill. When ripe, the seed capsule springs open and launches seeds away from the mother plant.

This unique seed capsule also gives the plant one of its common names—crane's bill geranium or spotted crane's bill, even stork's bill. In other areas, it's called spotted geranium or wood geranium. It has even been called old-maid's nightcap. The scientific name is tied to the sharply pointed appearance of the seed capsules, as well. Geranium is from the Greek geranos meaning crane or heron, and maculatum is Latin for spotted or mottled. In *Missouri Wildflowers*, Edgar Denison notes that while the species is sometimes known as spotted geranium, the plant seldom has spotted leaves.

The deeply cut, palmately lobed, dark-green foliage of wild geranium adds texture to the springtime landscape and persists through summer, if soil is moist. Otherwise, once seeds are ripe and dispersed, the plant becomes dormant. Wild geranium is super high in tannins and is extensively used as an herbal medicine. Native Americans were among the first to use it as an astringent. They collected roots just before the flowering period, dried them and powdered them. The powder was brewed into a strong tea that was used to treat diarrhea, painful nerves, canker sores and toothache. Dried, powdered roots also were used to coagulate blood.

The best use of wild geranium, however, is to brighten a spring landscape and provide wildlife habitat. Consider using them in your home garden in a wide sweep at the base of a tree or as a border plant in a shade garden. Over time the plants naturalize through self seeding and slowly spreading rhizomes. As it matures, wild geranium forms clumps about 22 inches high and, as mentioned earlier, nicely textured foliage will persist throughout the summer—if plants receive adequate moisture.

—Barbara Fairchild, photo by Jim Rathert





Wilhelmina CA

May is a great time to float, fish and bird this Bootheel bottomland forest.



COLLECT YOUR FISHING and birding gear and load up your canoe—it's time to explore the Wilhelmina Conservation Area, a prime Bootheel hardwood forest wetland ecosystem. In May, much of the area is still fairly wet, so be sure to pack a pair of rubber knee boots, too.

The Department purchased the 1,476-acre area near the town of Wilhelmina in Dunklin County between 1980 and 1987, filling a void in a region that previously had very little public land.

Today, the area permits floating, birding, fishing and camping, as well as hunting for deer, dove, quail, rabbit, squirrel, turkey and waterfowl during season. This diverse wildlife population is supported by typical oak-dominated bottomland forest, featuring pin, willow, Nuttall, swamp chestnut and overcup oaks.

During your visit, you might notice various forest management practices designed to improve wildlife habitat and maintain watershed quality. These include creating food sources in fields within the forests, maintaining open areas and using timber harvests to create suitable wildlife habitat for the greatest diversity of game and non-game species. Any disturbance is only temporary, and the normal aesthetic appearance will soon return.

Paddling a canoe or small flat-bottomed boat up the old St. Francis River channel is a good way to experience this wetland forest ecosystem. Along the way, you'll see lots of bald cypress and many of the area's resident bird species, including wood ducks, great blue and green herons, woodcock and an occasional wild turkey.

Countless turtles sun themselves on logs in the old channel and the slough, and you shouldn't be surprised to see an occasional alligator snapping turtle.

The best place to access the old St. Francis River channel is where DD Highway crosses the old channel (consult the area map, which is available online, for details). Canoes can be launched here or can be lowered into the water at the curve in Dunklin County Road 216.

If you want to fish during your float, you can expect to find good populations of bass, catfish, crappie and sunfish.

Although there are no designated campsites, primitive camping is permitted along the float routes, but seasonal closures may apply. As always, it is best to consult our online Conservation Atlas or call the area office before visiting.

—Bonnie Chasteen, photo by David Stonner

Recreation opportunities: Bird watching, camping, canoeing, fishing and hunting

Unique features: Bottomland hardwood forest with a portion of the old channel of the St. Francis River

For More Information

Call 573-290-5730 or visit www.MissouriConservation.org/a8013.





Hunting and Fishing Calendar

FISHING

	OPEN	CLOSE
Black Bass (certain Ozark streams, see the <i>Wildlife Code</i>)	5/22/10	2/28/11
impoundments and other streams year-round		
Bullfrogs and Green Frogs	Sunset	Midnight
	6/30/10	10/31/10
Paddlefish on the Mississippi River	3/15/10	5/15/10
Nongame Fish Snagging	3/15/10	5/15/10
Trout Parks	3/1/10	10/31/10

HUNTING

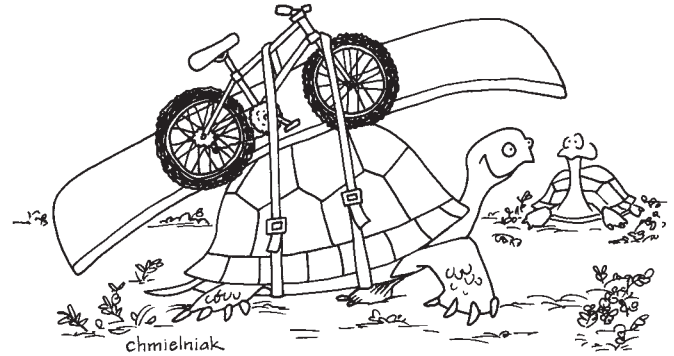
	OPEN	CLOSE
Coyote	5/19/10	3/31/11
Deer		
Firearms		
Urban	10/8/10	TBA
Youth	10/30/10	10/31/10
November	11/13/10	TBA
Antlerless	11/24/10	TBA
Muzzleloader	12/18/10	TBA
Archery	9/15/10	11/12/10
Furbearers	11/15/10	1/31/11
Groundhog	5/10/10	12/15/10
Pheasant		
Youth (North Zone only)	10/30/10	10/31/10
North Zone	11/1/10	1/15/11
Southern Zone	12/1/10	12/12/10
Quail	11/1/10	1/15/11
Youth	10/30/10	10/31/10
Rabbits	10/01/10	2/15/11
Squirrels	5/22/10	2/15/11
Turkey		
Spring	4/19/10	5/9/10
Fall Firearms	10/1/10	10/31/10
Waterfowl	please see the <i>Waterfowl Hunting Digest</i> or see www.MissouriConservation.org/7573	

TRAPPING

	OPEN	CLOSE
Furbearers	11/15/10	1/31/11
Otters and Muskrats	11/15/10	2/20/11

For complete information about seasons, limits, methods and restrictions, consult the *Wildlife Code* and the current summaries of *Missouri Hunting and Trapping Regulations* and *Missouri Fishing Regulations*, the *Fall Deer and Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information*, the *Waterfowl Hunting Digest* and the *Migratory Bird Hunting Digest*. For more information visit www.MissouriConservation.org/8707 or permit vendors.

The Department of Conservation's computerized point-of-sale system allows you to purchase or replace your permits through local vendors or by phone. The toll-free number is 800-392-4115. Allow 10 days for delivery of telephone purchases. To purchase permits online go to www.wildlifelicense.com/mo/.



Sport Utility Turtle

Contributors

MARK GOODWIN is a life-long Missouri resident who lives in Jackson. Recently retired from teaching high-school biology, Mark now has time to travel and hunt in other states. Last fall Mark enjoyed hunting elk in Colorado and pheasants in Kansas. His favorite hunting, however, remains Missouri's turkeys.

NOPPADOL PAOTHONG discovered his passion for wildlife photography in college in 1995. Born in Thailand, he came to the U.S. in 1993 to study graphic arts before switching to journalism. When not traveling and photographing, he enjoys time at home cooking. He, his wife, daughter and their two dogs live in Columbia.

FRANCIS SKALICKY is a metro media specialist for the Department of Conservation. He has been with the Department for 14 years. He and his wife, Michele, live in Springfield with their two daughters, Anna, 10, and Kate, 9. Also vying for attention in the Skalicky household are two dogs, four cats, two fish and three hermit crabs.

Nature photographer DAVID STONNER lives in Jefferson City with his wife, Angela, daughter, Maggie, and son, Sam. Since joining the Department of Conservation in 2007, he has made his favorite photographs while on the beautiful trails of southern Missouri, where he backpacks every chance he can get.

WHAT IS IT?

Hummingbird

On the back cover and right is a male ruby-throated hummingbird by Noppadol Paothong. They are common migrants throughout the state. Females have metallic green upperparts, whitish underparts and pale buff colored sides. Hummingbirds make a variety of sounds including chips, squeals and twitters. Nesting starts in mid-May. During nesting, insects, a rich source of protein, are fed to the growing young. Sometimes these insects are stolen from spider webs.



AGENT NOTES

Protecting and managing conservation areas

AS MISSOURI'S POPULATION continues to become more urbanized and the average landowner now owns smaller tracts of land, public use of conservation areas is on the rise. To help ensure quality forest, fish and wildlife into the future and to offer opportunities for people to discover nature, the Conservation Department owns and manages many public areas across the state. From small public fishing accesses on area rivers and streams to large tracts of pristine forests, each of these unique and beautiful areas is used by thousands of Missourians and visitors from other

states each year.

As an agent with the Department, one of my biggest challenges is protecting and managing these areas. Littering, vandalism and disregard of area regulations are a few of the challenges I face each year.

The Department spends many thousands of dollars maintaining, repairing and improving conservation areas. With a little help from you we can continue to enjoy these resources. A few things you can do to help include always remembering to remove your litter, reading and following area regulations and signage, encouraging others to do so as well, and reporting any signs of misuse to your local conservation agent or the County Sheriff's Department.

If every visitor to an area follows these simple requests, Missouri's conservation areas will continue to be beautiful resources available for all to enjoy.



Busiek State Forest and Wildlife Area

Ben Pursley is the conservation agent for Franklin County. If you would like to contact the agent for your county, phone your regional Conservation office listed on Page 3.

WHAT IS IT?

Our photographers have been busy exploring the intricacies of the Missouri outdoors. See if you can guess this month's natural wonder. The answer is revealed on the inside of this back cover.



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www.MissouriConservation.org/15287

Free to Missouri households

